

Pianist **REIKO UCHIDA** enjoys an active career as a soloist and chamber musician. She performs regularly throughout the United States, Asia, and Europe, in venues including Suntory Hall, Avery Fisher Hall, Alice Tully Hall, the 92nd Street Y, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Kennedy Center, and the White House. First prize winner of the Joanna Hodges Piano Competition and Zinetti International Competition, she has appeared as a soloist with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Santa Fe Symphony, Greenwich Symphony, and the Princeton Symphony, among others. She made her New York solo debut in 2001 at Weill Hall under the auspices of the Abby Whiteside Foundation. As a chamber musician she has performed at the Marlboro, Santa Fe, Tanglewood, and Spoleto Music Festivals; as guest artist with Camera Lucida, American Chamber Players, and the Borromeo, Talich, Daedalus, St. Lawrence, and Tokyo String Quartets; and in recital with Jennifer Koh, Thomas Meglitoranza, Anne Akiko Meyers, Sharon Robinson, and Jaime Laredo. Her recording with Jennifer Koh, “String Poetic” was nominated for a Grammy Award. She is a past member of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center Two. As a youngster, she performed on Johnny Carson’s Tonight Show. Ms. Uchida holds a Bachelor’s degree from the Curtis Institute of Music, a Master’s degree from the Mannes College of Music, and an Artist Diploma from the Juilliard School. She studied with Claude Frank, Leon Fleisher, Edward Aldwell, Margo Garrett, and Sophia Rosoff. She has taught at the Brevard Music Center, and is currently an associate faculty member at Columbia University.

Violinist **JEFF THAYER** is currently the concertmaster of the San Diego Symphony. Previous positions include assistant concertmaster of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, associate concertmaster of the North Carolina Symphony, concertmaster and faculty member of the Music Academy of the West (Santa Barbara), and concertmaster of the Canton (OH) Symphony Orchestra. He is a graduate of the Cleveland Institute of Music, the Eastman School of Music, and the Juilliard School’s Pre-College Division. His teachers include William Preucil, Donald Weilerstein, Zvi Zeitlin, Dorothy DeLay, and James Lyon. He has appeared as soloist with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, the San Diego Symphony, the Jupiter Symphony, the North Carolina Symphony, the Canton Symphony Orchestra, the Pierre Monteux School Festival Orchestra, the Spartanburg Philharmonic, the Cleveland Institute of Music Symphony Orchestra, The Music Academy of the West Festival Orchestra, the Williamsport Symphony Orchestra, the Nittany Valley Symphony Orchestra, and the Conservatory Orchestra of Cordoba, among others. He attended Keshet Eilon (Israel), Ernen Musikdorf (Switzerland), Music Academy of the West, Aspen, New York String Orchestra Seminar, the Quartet Program, and as the 1992 Pennsylvania Governor Scholar, Interlochen Arts Camp. Through a generous loan from Irwin and Joan Jacobs and the Jacobs’ Family Trust, Mr. Thayer plays on the 1708 “Sir Bagshawe” Stradivarius.

Hanah Elizabeth Stuart, hailed as a performing artist who “wields a violin with unmistakable panache” (Theater Mania), represents a new and exciting 21st century breed of violinists. Previously, Ms. Stuart was a violinist with the Utah Symphony and the Ars Viva Symphony Orchestra. Ms. Stuart has served as Concertmaster of The Juilliard Orchestra, The Juilliard Chamber Orchestra, The YouTube Symphony Orchestra, and she has also served various Principal roles in festival orchestras including the Music Academy of the West and the Aspen Music Festival. She joined the San Diego Symphony Orchestra in 2016. Ms. Stuart’s unique talents led her to off-Broadway in the spring of 2012 where she starred as Young Erica Morini in The Morini Strad alongside of Mary Beth Peil and Michael Laurence. Media appearances include features on Harmony Films’ documentary *The Road to Carnegie Hall*; CBS’s *The Early Show*; 2009 Kronberg Academy’s Abschlusskonzert der Meisterschüler (Kronberg, Germany); an internationally broadcast performance for Keshet Eilon’s Gala Concert in Tel Aviv, Israel; features on WGN, HBO, MTV, SpikeTV’s Gamehead and G4 at E3 Summer 2007 with her band, *Corporeal*; 2006 Academy Award-nominated documentary, *Rehearsing a Dream*; and numerous NPR broadcast performances since 2002. Ms. Stuart has a Bachelor’s and Master’s degree from The Juilliard School where she studied under David Chan and Joel Smirnoff. She previously studied with Roland and Almita Vamos at the Music Institute of Chicago. Other mentors include Kathleen Winkler, Shlomo Mintz, Ily Kaler, Rachel Barton-Pine, Desiree Ruhstrat, Simin Ganatra and Paul Kantor among others.

Award-winning violist **Che-Yen Chen** is a founding member of the Formosa Quartet. Upon winning the First-Prize in the 2003 Primrose International Viola Competition, Chen and his quartet won the Grand-Prize of the 2006 London International String Quartet Competition. San Diego Union Tribune described him as an artist who finds “not just the subtle emotion, but the humanity hidden in the music.” Chen has recorded on EMI, Delos, New World Records, and Aeolian Classics. His recording with the Formosa Quartet, *From Hungary to Taiwan*, released by Bridge Records, was named “The Best Classical Releases of January 2019” by New York Public Radio WQXR. As an orchesral musician, Chen served as principal violist of the San Diego Symphony and the Mainly Mozart Festival Orchestra. He has appeared as guest principal with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, National Arts Centre Orchestra, and Toronto Symphony Orchestra. As an active performer of solo, chamber and orchestral repertoire, combined with his passion in education, Chen’s expertise in these areas has led him to embark on Formosa Quartet’s cofounding of the Formosa Chamber Music Festival in Taiwan. It is the first intensive chamber music training program of its kind in this island country. Currently, Formosa Quartet serves as the quartet-in-residence with the National Youth Orchestra Canada and the newly inaugurated Taipei Music Academy and Festival. As a former member of Lincoln Center Chamber Music Society’s Browsers Program and a participant of the Marlboro Festival, Chen’s other chamber music projects include Camera Lucida and the Myriad Trio. He has given masterclasses across North America and Asia and had served on the faculty of the University of Southern California until 2019. Chen joined UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music as the professor of viola in 2018 as the school celebrates its formal establishment as UCLA’s 12th professional school.

Cellist **CHARLES CURTIS** has been Professor of Music at UCSD since Fall 2000. Previously he was Principal Cello of the Symphony Orchestra of the North German Radio in Hamburg, a faculty member at Princeton, the cellist of the Ridge String Quartet, and a sought-after chamber musician and soloist in the classical repertoire. A student of Harvey Shapiro and Leonard Rose at Juilliard, on graduation Curtis received the Piatigorsky Prize of the New York Cello Society. He has appeared as soloist with the San Francisco, National and Baltimore Symphonies, the Symphony Orchestra of Berlin, the NDR Symphony, the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, the BBC Scottish Symphony, the Janacek Philharmonic, as well as orchestras in Italy, Brazil and Chile. He is internationally recognized as a leading performer of unique solo works created expressly for him by composers such as La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela, Éliane Radigue, Alvin Lucier, Christian Wolff, Alison Knowles and Tashi Wada. Time Out New York called his recent New York performances “the stuff of contemporary music legend,” and the New York Times noted that Curtis’ “playing unflinchingly combined lucidity and poise... lyricism and intensity.” Recent seasons have included concerts at documenta 14 in Athens, Greece; the Dia Art Foundation’s Dia:Chelsea space in New York; the Darmstadt Festival in Germany; the Chinati Foundation in Marfa, Texas; the Geometry of Now festival in Moscow; the Serralves Museum in Porto, Portugal; and Walt Disney Hall in Los Angeles, leading a performance of La Monte Young’s *Second Dream*.

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Chamber Music Concerts at UC San Diego
 Monday, January 13th, 2020 – 7:30 p.m.
 Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

Divertimento for Piano Trio K. 245 (1776)

W. A. Mozart
 (1756-1791)

Allegro assai
 Adagio
 Rondo: Tempo di menuetto

String Quartet in D major, Opus 18 Nr. 3 (1801)

Ludwig van Beethoven
 (1770-1827)

Allegro
 Andante con moto
 Allegro
 Presto

intermission

Sonata in g minor, Opus 19 for Viola and Piano (1901)

Sergei Rachmaninov
 (1873-1943)

Lento – Allegro moderato
 Allegro scherzando
 Andante
 Allegro mosso

Jeff Thayer, violin
 Hanah Stuart, violin
 Che-Yen Chen, viola
 Charles Curtis, cello
 Reiko Uchida, piano

Mozart: Divertimento in B flat major, K. 254

The K. 254 Divertimento is effectively Mozart's first piano trio. It was composed in 1776 when Mozart was twenty, and nearing the end of his time in Salzburg. Its three-movement structure and the commentary of the violin and cello on the pianist's right and left hands, respectively, almost suggests a kind of piano sonata with string embellishment. In Mozart's original manuscript, the piano part appears between the violin and cello parts, perhaps more similar to the *basso continuo* style of the Baroque era.

Frequent doubling of the cello with the piano's bass notes is a ubiquitous feature of Mozart's early chamber music, and though Mozart would abandon this style of writing later on as his music became more contrapuntally complex, there is a delightful subtlety in the way he alternates between different combinations to create different textures and affects. For example, while the piano carries the melody for much of the first movement, the character of the violin, with its ability to sustain long notes, lends itself better to the slower, lyrical *Adagio*, where the piano often recedes to allow the violin to occupy the foreground. When the roles of the two are reversed, and each instrument steps outside its comfort zone (the violin playing accompanying arpeggios, for example) they achieve a poignant sympathy. While the cello is less independent than the violin, it occasionally steps into the foreground as well, often in more unified textures.

On the surface, Mozart's music is devoid of pathos. His simple melodies, elegantly and subtly harmonized, flow with an untouchable kind of sanguine grace. Here, Mozart's unique voice as a composer is unmistakable, but the brief moments of chromaticism, and sudden modulations to a minor key, offer a window into a different aspect of Mozart's psyche. While Mozart never indulges in the extreme chromaticism of his later style, the middle sections of the outer movements contain some surprising harmonic transitions. These brief moments are made all the more captivating by the casualness with which Mozart presents them; the music generates drama not by bravado but rather by understated sincerity.

Beethoven: String Quartet Op. 18 No. 3 in D major

Though numbered third in Beethoven's set of six Opus 18 quartets, this quartet was composed first, making it the first of all 16 of Beethoven's quartets. At the time, the string quartet was the last major genre of composition which Beethoven had yet to tackle. Beethoven's self-awareness in embarking upon a forbidding genre, deemed as the sole province of masters like Mozart and Haydn, reflects a certain uncharacteristic degree of pragmatism, respect, and perhaps even caution. Opus 18 No. 3 is often regarded as the most modest of the Opus 18 quartets; it is relatively succinct in its large-scale structure. The inspired transitions and ingenious casting of form and structure as an expressive arena seem to draw heavily upon Haydn's mature quartets. However, it is also perhaps the most lyrical of the Opus 18 quartets, and contains some of the most inspired melodic ideas of the entire Opus 18 cycle. The opening theme approaches a Mozartian confluence of simplicity and lyricism with its gentle but highly expressive offbeat resolutions of melodic notes. The opening interval of an ascending minor seventh, presented initially in the first two notes of the first violin, serves as the basis for Beethoven's harmonic and melodic inventiveness, and undergoes a captivating series of transformations.

Despite the Mozartian and Haydnesque elements of Beethoven's technique, each theme comes flying out of the gates with a uniquely Beethovenian urgency, recalling the impetuous energy of other early-Beethoven masterpieces such as the First Symphony and the Opus 2 No. 1 Piano Sonata in f minor. The development of the first movement, though very brief, is one of the most striking in the entirety of the Opus 18 quartets: Beethoven's breathtaking harmonic transitions come hurtling at an overwhelming pace as the music's motivic content is subsumed by primal urgency. In subsequent movements the ascending seventh of the opening motif transforms into an ascending octave (often in the cello) and becomes a part of the music's texture. The subsuming of more "classical" elements like melody and rhythmic structure into texture and harmony perhaps foreshadows the compositional technique of Beethoven's middle-period, and Romanticism in general.

Rachmaninov: Cello Sonata in G minor, Op. 19 (Arr. for Viola)

Written and premiered in 1901, this Sonata came into existence amid a spectacular resurrection: Rachmaninov's iconic Second Piano Concerto had premiered just the month before, ending a three-year dry spell. Less than four years previously, Rachmaninov had suffered an emotional breakdown following the disastrous 1897 premiere of his first Symphony, leading to a crippling three years of depression during which he composed virtually nothing and performed little. The virtuoso pianist and composer, barely subsisting off of a small teaching income, describes himself as "...the man who had suffered a stroke and for a long time had lost the use of his head and hands".

Judging by his music, Rachmaninov never quite left behind the catatonic anguish of this period; rather, he seems to have found a way of harnessing it to fuel his creative voice. As in much of his music, the Cello Sonata poetically marries hopelessness with tenderness and despair with longing. The resulting tension is emotionally overwhelming: Rachmaninov constantly walks a tightrope, miraculously balancing almost excessive sentimentality against heartfelt sincerity, all the while teetering on the brink of madness.

The unifying thread of the sonata is an often veiled descending six-note idea contained in the main theme of the first movement, and appearing in different forms throughout the sonata. The narrative approach to developing thematic content lends itself to an autobiographical interpretation of the Sonata as a whole, mirroring the peaks and valleys of Rachmaninov's own life. In the hair-raising Scherzo, full of nervous tension, the motif is stretched taught in a dotted-rhythm. The Scherzo portends impending doom, despair, or madness. The music struggles with its own pathos, which alternates between foreground and background. After a lyrical middle-section, the return of the "doom" theme drags us inexorably into oblivion.

The subsequent Andante has the character of a bittersweet elegy, remembering something precious and lost. For all its sweeping melodies, weaving together despair with optimism, the Andante also has a subtle kind of catatonia, seeming to wallow in its own madness. The finale begins in a valiant style, shockingly out of character for Rachmaninov, which gradually incorporates ideas from previous movements, seeming to resurrect and reform itself before our eyes in a kind of triumphant reincarnation. The emotional roller-coaster of the four-movements in succession only serves to further amplify Rachmaninov's stratospheric emotional intensity.

~ Amir Moheimani